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ABSTRACT

A comprehensive academic advising handbook that is attractive, useful, versatile, and inexpensive is the cornerstone of a well-developed and implemented academic advising program. Seven steps have proven effective in handbook development: (1) making the commitment--appropriate campus administrators must commit the human and financial resources to develop and produce the handbook and zealously support its utilization by faculty; (2) handbook responsibliity--the administration must designate the office responsible for producing the handbook and the chain of command in seeking assistance; (3) determining the objectives and purposes of the handbook--several questions should be considered, such as who is the targeted audience, and what are the handbook's general purposes (e.g., promoting quality advising) and specific purposes (e.g., providing correct, concise, and consistent information); (4) Content--some or all of the following topics should be addressed: definitions, advisor responsibility, specific regulations/guidelines for registration and scheduling, academic policies and procedures, philosophy and objectives of the advising system, advising techniques, sample forms, directory of campus assistance, legal responsibilities, procedures for advising probationary students and other special groups, advising schedule, advanced standing, student assistance, characteristics of a good advisor, advisement strategies, referral skills, do's and don'ts, and a bibliography; (5) Organizational Pattern--the handbook should be organized in an easily accessible manner; (6) Typing and Printing--various options are available for preparing the manuscript and binding the handbook; and (7) Revision--normally, the handbook will be updated annually, but a looseleaf binder may be updated more often and less expensively. Additional notes and suggestions for handbook development are included. (JMC)

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Producing a Comprehensive Academic Advising Handbook

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PRODUCING A COMPREHENSIVE ACADEMIC ADVISING HANDBOOK

Jerry Ford and Sheila Stoma Ford

Introduction

Using a comprehensive academic advising handbook that is attractive, useful, versatile, and inexpensive is the cornerstone of a well developed and implemented academic advising program. Colleges and universities have experienced the need for assistance to help them meet the challenge. An advising handbook will assist advisors in making their advisees' educational experiences more meaningful and significant. The following steps and related questions have proven very effective in handbook development.

Step I Making the Commitment

The commitment to develop and utilize a faculty advising handbook to enhance academic advising must be made by the appropriate administrator(s) on the campus. The administration must commit the financial and human resources necessary for the development and production of the handbook. After the handbook has been completed, the administration must zealously support the utilization of the handbook by the faculty.

Step II Handbook Responsibility

The second step in developing an advising handbook is to determine who is responsible for the handbook--which office, department, and/or person has the assigned responsibility of producing the handbook. The administration must designate the

office responsible and the chain of command that the office is to follow in seeking assistance with major decisions and budget considerations. A specific office must be designated, or the handbook, being everyone's business, is not completed because it becomes nobody's business.

Step III Determining the Objectives and Purposes

The next step is to identify the purposes of the handbook since the purposes will determine much of the content. Several questions should be considered when identifying the purposes. Those questions are as follows:

1. Who is the targeted audience, or who will use the handbook on campus? Should the handbook be designed for:
   a) All faculty?
   b) Faculty in only one college/school?
   c) Faculty in a single department?
   d) Peer advisors?
   e) Professional advisors?
   f) Staff personnel?
   g) Advising center personnel?
   h) All of the above?
   i) Etc.?
2. What are some of the general purposes/objectives of the advising handbook? General purposes might include:
   a) Promoting quality academic advising
   b) Improving academic advising

c) Educating faculty advisors

d) Assisting students to get a "fair shake"

e) Helping faculty members to advise properly

f) Using the handbook as a training aid

g) Raising the profile and importance of academic advising

h) Providing a definition of good academic advising

3. What are the specific purposes of the handbook? The academic advising handbook might include some or all of the following specific purposes:

a) To provide correct and accurate information

b) To provide concise information

c) To provide consistent information

d) To provide referral sources/resources

e) To articulate administration's policies and procedures

f) To provide standardized assistance to students

g) To provide descriptions of the advising process

h) To define good advisement

i) To facilitate continuous, ongoing advisor training

j) To provide resource materials and information

k) To simplify the advisement process

l) To consolidate advising information

m) To disseminate current information to all advisors

n) To establish responsibilities and procedures for advisors

o) To communicate the philosophy and goals of advising

p) To serve as a quick and easy reference for advising-related questions

Step IV Content

The content of the handbook will determine whether or not the intended users actually utilize the handbook. Closely allied to the purpose and objectives, the content should be a conduit for achieving those objectives. The content should include some or all of the following as related to the specific audience for which the handbook is being developed--

1. Definitions of the advisor and the advising process
2. Responsibilities of the advisor, both general and specific
3. Specific regulations/guidelines for assisting during the registration/scheduling process
   a) Ground rules for placing students in the appropriate English classes
   b) Guidelines for advising students into the appropriate mathematics classes
   c) Course sequencing guidelines
   d) Unique issues
4. Academic policies and procedures
5. Philosophy and objectives of the advising system
6. Advising techniques
7. Examples of advising forms used by advisors and students

8. Directory of various on-campus assistance sources for referral purposes
9. Legal responsibilities of advisors (Buckley Amendment)
10. Procedures for advising specific populations of students
    a) Students on probation
    b) Provisionally admitted students
    c) Teacher certification candidates
    d) Etc.
11. Advising schedule/calendar as it relates to the registration schedule, emphasizing key dates
12. Easily used table of contents
13. Appendices with tables or charts summarizing advanced standing--CLEP, ACT, SAT, etc.
14. Student assistance items
    a) Time management guidelines
    b) Help for low-achieving advisees--a self-inquiry routine for advisors
    c) Listening skills summary
    d) Study tips for the learner
    e) Scholastic difficulty analysis form
    f) Sample lecture notes
15. Characteristics of a good advisor
16. Strategies of advisement
17. Referral skills summary
18. The do's of academic advising
19. The don't's of academic advising
20. Thirty reminders of effective advising

21. Letter of explanation briefly describing the organizational pattern of the handbook
22. Complete bibliography listing the sources of all handbook entries and sources of material

Step V Organizational Pattern

The material included in the advising handbook must be organized in such a way that it is as easily accessed by users as possible. The format or organizational pattern for the handbook is, therefore, of critical importance. The following three categories of information surface as necessary for inclusion in any advising handbook:

1. Essential information about the role of the advisor and about advising regulations in general
2. Articles and other resource materials useful to the advisor who wishes additional help in improving advising know-how
3. Pertinent information pertaining to specific departments and to specific regulations at the institution for which the handbook is being developed

Other categories that might be included in the organizational pattern are:

1. Section depicting examples of all forms used in advising
2. General education requirements (not a duplication of the catalogue)
3. Campus services available - local referral sources
4. General information related to advising - philosophy/mission

Step VI Typing/Printing

Once the handbook has been developed, it, of course, must be readied for final production. The secretary in the office responsible for producing the handbook becomes the key person in finalizing the copy for printing purposes. The final draft might be

1. Typed on a regular typewriter
2. Typed on a word processor
3. Typed and stored on a computer for easy retrieval and update
4. Typed by the department/college secretarial pool or services
5. Copied on a regular copy machine on campus
6. Copied and bound in the campus secretarial pool or services
7. Type set and printed in the on-campus print shop
8. Type set and printed off campus at a local printing company

The final copy of the handbook after printing might be bound:

1. As a simple stapled copy
2. As a spiral-bound copy
3. In a loose-leaf two- or three-ring binder allowing for easy updates

Step VII Revisions

As with most publications in academia, the advising handbook will be out of date the moment it is published; therefore, one must address the issue of how often the handbook should be updated, revised, and produced. Since changes occur in the academic setting on a regular and an irregular basis and since advisors must be informed of these changes, the timetable for updating the handbook becomes even more critical.

Such items as the manner in which the handbook is bound, the urgency of the specific policy change, the staff support available for processing and distributing the update, etc., will help determine the timing on any updates. Normally, the handbook will be updated, revised, or reprinted annually. If the handbook has been bound in a looseleaf binder, it may be updated more often than annually and with far less expense.

Several weeks prior to any planned revision of the handbook, various departments on campus that have information essential to the success of the advising system should be notified for their input. They may be notified by phone, memorandum, letter, card, etc., informing them of the time schedule for the handbook revision. If various departments have specific pages in the handbook, it is helpful for copies of these pages to be sent to those individuals with a note reminding them of the revision deadlines. The secretary in charge of typing the updates should follow through to make certain that all departments have responded to the request for updated information.

Notes and Suggestions

1. The handbook should not duplicate the catalogue--unless it summarizes or clarifies items in the catalogue.
2. The handbook should not duplicate the regular faculty handbook (produced by the faculty senate/assembly or by the institution's administration).
3. The handbook should not duplicate the student handbook published by the student affairs/development office.
4. The various sections of the handbook might be color coded--utilizing a different color for each section.
5. The various sections of the handbook might be emphasized with tabs on the edges of the pages.
6. In order to make the advising handbook interesting and versatile, utilize quotations, poems, definitions, etc., where extra space is available at the bottom of pages, at the end of lists, etc.
7. Pictures might also be incorporated in the handbook when space is a luxury.
8. A possible simplified seven-item outline for an advising handbook might be as follows:
    a) Table of Contents
    b) Letter of Introduction/Explanation
    c) Section One - General Research Data
        1) Definition of advising
        2) Roles and functions of advisors

3) Objectives

4) Limitations

d) Section Two - Resource Materials

1) General responsibilities of the advisor

2) General responsibilities of the advisee

3) Characteristics of a good advisor

4) Referral summary

5) Time management hints

6) Legal issues in advising

7) Etc.

e) Section Three - Specific Department/Campus Regulations

1) Specific advisor responsibilities

2) What should advisors be expected to do at XXU

3) Guidelines for English placement

4) Ground rules for math placement

5) Etc.

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Appendixes

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